

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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R 031412Z JUL 78
FM USMISSION USBERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7187
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USNATO

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PGOV, AKB, GE, UR, GW
SUBJECT: MISSION BELIEF THAT ALLIES SHOULD ANSWER LATEST ABRASIMOV
INTERVIEW TOUCHING ON BERLIN STATUS QUESTIONS

REF: (A) BONN 12105, (B) USBERLIN 778, (C) 77 USBERLIN 2881
(D) USBERLIN 0356

SUMMARY: MISSION BELIEVES THAT WESTERN ALLIES
SHOULD NOT ALLOW LATEST ABRASIMOV COMMENTS ON BERLIN STATUS
MADE JUNE 26 IN ARD TELEVISION INTERVIEW TO PASS WITHOUT
CHALLENGE. SOVIET USE OF WESTERN MEDIA TO PUBLICIZE THEIR
VIEWPOINTS ON BERLIN ACHIEVES IMPACT ON PUBLIC OPINION
HERE THAT CONFIDENTIAL REJOINDERS MADE TO SOVIET
DIPLOMATS OBVIOUSLY CANNOT EQUAL. AN AUTHORITATIVE,
PUBLIC WESTERN PRONOUNCEMENT IS REQUIRED IN OUR VIEW.
END SUMMARY.

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1. FOR THE RECORD WE WOULD LIKE TO DISAGREE WITH THE
RESULTS OF THE BONN GROUP DISCUSSION REPORTED REF A.
IN BERLIN WE FIRST CONSIDERED A LOCAL BRITISH DRAFT
COVERING MOST ABRASIMOV POINTS TO BE USED IN RESPONSE
TO PRESS INQUIRIES. THAT DRAFT WAS PREPARED AT SUG-
GESTION OF BRITISH EMBASSY BONN. WE SUGGESTED A
SHARPER AND TERSER TEXT TO BE ISSUED AS AN ALLIED

STATEMENT. WE COULD SEE NO REASON FOR THE ALLIES TO HIDE BEHIND INSPIRED PRESS QUESTIONS RATHER THAN SIMPLY ISSUE A DECLARATION AT A TIME OF OUR CHOOSING.

2. OUR REASONING FOLLOWS. ON JUNE 26 ABRASIMOV MADE USE OF WESTERN MEDIA FOR THE THIRD TIME IN LESS THAN A YEAR TO PUBLICIZE THE SOVIET VIEW OF BERLIN STATUS QUESTIONS. FIRST TIME WAS NOVEMBER, 1977 TAGESSPIEGEL INTERVIEW (REFTEL :); THEN CAME APRIL 4 PRESS CONFERENCE AT JOURNALISTS CLUB (REF B); AND NOW JUNE 26 ARD TV INTERVIEW. WEST BERLINERS, EAST GERMANS WATCHING TV, AND WEST GERMANS HAVE THUS BEEN TREATED TO A PUBLIC SOVIET EXPOSITION OF THEIR VIEWS ON BERLIN AND THAT PRESENTED BY A SENIOR SOVIET AMBASSADOR. IN ADDITION, SOVIETS AND GDR PUBLISHED LAST WINTER COLLECTION OF DOCUMENTS ENTITLED "QA ON WEST BERLIN AND ITS REALIZATION" (REFTEL D) GIVING HIGHLY TENDENTIOUS SLANT TO BERLIN MATTERS. NATURALLY, SOVIETS SAW TO IT THAT PUBLICATION RECEIVED SPACE TO THE PUBLICATION.

3. AFTER EACH SUCH SALLY INTO THE PUBLIC MEDIA, THE ALLIES SEEM TO OPPOSE ANY PUBLIC REJOINDER ON GROUNDS THAT POLEMICS ARE BAD, TIT-FOR-TAT IS BAD, CONFIDENTIALITY OF AMBASSADORIAL DISCUSSIONS MUST BE MAINTAINED, PRESS INTEREST IN PARTICULAR EVENT HAS EBBED, LATEST AMBASSADORIAL LUNCH HAD PROVIDED ALLIES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH CHANCE TO RESTATE THEIR POSITION ETC. FRENCH POLAD PERRIN TOLD MISOFF JUNE 30 THAT WHILE HE PERSONALLY WAS NOT IN FULL AGREEMENT WITH THIS LINE, HE KNEW THAT AMB BRUNET (REF A) DID NOT WANT TO ENGAGE IN PUBLIC POLEMICS AND THAT BRUNET REMAINED EMBARRASSED BY LEAK OF PART OF HIS DECEMBER CONVERSATION WITH ABRASIMOV. AS FOR BRITISH, NOT ONLY WE HERE BUT OUR LOCAL BRITISH FRIENDS AS WELL ARE INCREASINGLY APPALLED AT LONDON'S ABSOLUTE REFUSAL TO CONSIDER ANY COURSE OF ACTION ON BERLIN WHICH COULD RESULT IN THE SLIGHTEST UNHAPPINESS FOR SOVIETS.

4. PROBLEM REMAINS THAT ABRASIMOV, SOVIETS AND GDR HAVE NO ESTABLISHED RECORD OF STATING THEIR POSITION PUBLICLY AT NO COST TO THEM. EAST GERMANS, WEST BERLINERS ETC. MUST HAVE GAINED IMPRESSION THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR IS ONLY ONE OF FOUR AMBASSADORS RESPONSIBLE FOR QA WHO IS WILLING TO SPEAK IN PUBLIC, AND THAT ONLY FRG, AND THEN NOT ALWAYS TOO CLEARLY, IS WILLING TO MAKE REJOINDER. AT SOCIAL EVENT JUNE 29, GROUP OF SOVIETS PRESSED HARD TO LEARN HOW UNHAPPY ALLIES WERE WITH JUNE 26 INTERVIEW AND WHETHER A RESPONSE WOULD

BE FORTHCOMING. THEY ASKED WHETHER WE QUESTIONED
"RIGHT" OF ABRASIMOV TO GIVE INTERVIEW; WE REPLIED THAT
OF COURSE HE HAD THE RIGHT JUST AS HE HAD THE RIGHT
TO REFUSE TO GIVE AN INTEVIEW.

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2. WE BELIEVE THAT HOWEVER ELOQUENTLY FRENCH AMBASSADOR
BRUNET STATED WESTERN POSITION ON JUNE 27, SUCH A
CONFIDENTIAL REJOINDER CANNOT REPLACE A PUBLIC STATEMENT
OF THE ALLIED VIEW. ONLY THEN WOULD SOVIETS REALIZE
THAT WHEN THEY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF WESTERN PRESS FREEDOMS,
THEY MUST EXPECT TO PAY PRICE OF HAVING WESTERN POSITION
ON BERLIN ISSUES STATED IN SUCH A WAY THAT GDR CITIZENS
WILL BE REMINDED THAT THE SOVIET VIEWS ARE NOT SHARED
BY THE WEST. THAT REALIZATION IN TURN COULD IN OUR
VIEW DIMINISH THE SOVIET ARDOR FOR SUCH EXERCISES.
WE LIKE TO THINK THAT IF FALIN AND OTHERS REALLY OP-
POSE SUCH PROPAGANDA EXERCISES (REF A), THEN THEIR
HAND WOULD BE STRENGTHENED IF THEY COULD POINT OUT TO
MOSCOW THAT THE END RESULT WOULD ONLY BE AN ALLIED
REPLY WHICH WOULD REMIND THE GERMAN LISTENING PUBLIC
IN EAST AND WEST THAT THE SOVIET POSITION ON BERLIN IS
NOT ACCEPTED BY THE WEST.

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6. IT OCCURS TO US THAT THE VISIT OF PRESIDENT CARTER TO BERLIN ON JULY 15 WILL PROVIDE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO RESTATE OUR CASE ON BERLIN AND WE HOPE THAT A STATUS-RELATED POINT WILL BE INCLUDED EITHER IN HIS GOLDEN BOOK REMARKS OR COME UP AT THE TOWN MEETING. SINCE THE PRESIDENT'S ENTIRE VISIT TO BERLIN WILL BE CARRIED LIVE BY GERMAN TV, HIS REMARKS WILL RECEIVE FULL COVERAGE. WE BELIEVE NEVERTHELESS THAT CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE EVENTUAL APPEARANCE OF AMBASSADOR STOESSEL OR ONE OF HIS COLLEAGUES ON TV IN WHICH THE PUBLIC COULD WITNESS AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF THE ALLIED VIEWS ON BERLIN.

7. COMMENT: WE SHARE FULLY THE GENERAL PREFERENCE THAT THE BERLIN DEBATE BE MUTED AND THAT OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SOVIETS ON STATUS QUESTIONS BE TREATED CONFIDENTIALLY. UNFORTUNATELY, THE SOVIETS DO NOT SHARE OUR PREFERENCE. THEY GO PUBLIC PROBABLY AS A KIND OF VISIBLE REMINDER OF THEIR ROLE HERE. WE FEEL THIS KIND OF PUBLIC RELATIONS CHALLENGE NEEDS A RESPONSE. AS IN SO MANY OTHER BERLIN ISSUES, IF THE SOVIETS WISH TO TAKE ACTION, IN THIS CASE TO ADD A PUBLIC DIMENSION TO OUR DIPLOMATIC DISPUTES WITH THEM, THEY FORCE US EITHER TO RESPOND OR ACCEPT SOME DAMAGE TO OUR POSITION. GEORGE

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